Housing First Overview

What is *Housing First?* Housing First approaches quickly connect people experiencing a housing crisis with permanent housing without preconditions (e.g., sobriety, treatment or service participation requirements) and the supports needed to maintain housing.

Basic Elements of A Housing First Approach

- Housing crisis focus and rapid intervention when household is homeless or at imminent risk
- Consumer self-determination and choice, including housing choice and client centered goals
- Low-barrier housing and service accessibility. Acceptance into program/housing regardless of sobriety, mental health history, criminal history or low/no income
- Service and other compliance issues not a condition of tenancy in housing
- Progressive engagement techniques focused on delivering the right resources to the right people at the right point in time for the right amount of time
- Programs are client ready – recognizing that all clients are housing ready with right supports

Housing First is <u>not always</u> Housing Only: *Following a Housing First approach relies on a partnership between the consumer, service provider and community partners to ensure that short or long term service needs are met (according to consumer preferences) once the individual or family is permanently housed.*

Challenging Assumptions: The Data

Assumption: Housing stability can only be achieved by households who have the means to readily pay for their housing costs now and in future.

- ✓ Majority of very low income households pay more than 50% of their income for housing and *do not* become literally homeless
- ✓ Most people who become literally homeless regain housing with limited help and do not become literally homeless again – *even though they may still have high housing costs*

Are you practicing Housing First? A few indicators…

☐ Are participants accepted whether or not sober?

☐ Do you serve participants who have little or no income upon entry?

☐ Does your assessment and case planning focus on helping participants regain housing as quickly as possible and without conditions?

☐ Can participants refuse services and remain in their housing?

☐ Are you striving to serve those with the highest barriers and most intensive service needs?

Overcoming Challenges

- ✓ Don't be afraid to fail: some households will lose their housing again. Work to prevent that, but if they return you might need to do something different.
- ✓ You're not alone: Housing First requires partnerships and collaboration across the homeless system and with community housing and service partners.
- ✓ Housing First requires honest communication with participants about their barriers and goals. Don't be afraid to have those difficult discussions with participants and partners alike.
- ✓ Housing First is not necessarily Housing Only: Providing the right level of stabilization services and linkages to community-based support is critical.
- ✓ You can do it: data overwhelmingly supports the use of Housing First approaches to end homelessness. It may not be easy, but it works.